

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Northern District of Alabama

United States of America

v.

LIN LONGJIN

Defendant(s)

Case No.

MAG No. 20-44

2020 FEB 20 A 9:03

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of February 17-18, 2020 in the county of Madison in the
Northern District of Alabama, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

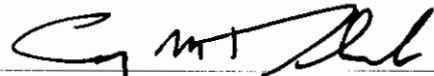
18 U.S.C. Sec. 1343

Offense Description

Wire Fraud

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

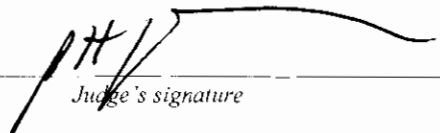
See attached affidavit.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.*Complainant's signature*

COREY M. DOBECK, USSS Special Agent

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: 02/20/2020City and state: Birmingham, Alabama
Judge's signature

Hon. JOHN ENGLAND, U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Printed name and title

I, Corey Dobeck, being duly sworn, depose and say:

EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND

1. I am a Special Agent with the United States Secret Service. I have been employed in that capacity since April 2018. I have completed Special Agent Training Course at the James J. Rowley Training Center. In addition to basic criminal investigative training, I have completed Uniformed Police training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, New Mexico, where I learned to identify firearms and narcotics. Prior to becoming a Special Agent, I was a United States Secret Service Uniformed Division Officer where I patrolled the White House Complex and surrounding areas of Washington, D.C. and had the ability to enforce laws pertaining to District of Columbia.

2. My duties as a Special Agent of the United States Secret Service include investigating financial crimes, to include identity theft, credit card fraud, counterfeit checks, and counterfeit US currency. I have made numerous arrests on subjects regarding these matters. I received advanced training in this at the James J. Rowley Training Center in Beltsville, Maryland.

3. The information in this Affidavit is based on my personal knowledge, information provided to me by other law enforcement officers and individuals, and my review of reports and memoranda of other law enforcement officers. The information in this Affidavit is provided for the limited purpose of establishing

probable cause in connection with the criminal complaint charging **LIN LONGJIN** with violating Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343, Wire Fraud, which provides that “[w]hoever, having devised or intending to devise any scheme or artifice to defraud, or for obtaining money or property by means of false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises, transmits or causes to be transmitted by means of wire, radio, or television communication in interstate or foreign commerce, any writings, signs, signals, pictures, or sounds for the purpose of executing such scheme or artifice, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 20 years, or both.” 18 U.S.C. § 1343.

4. Based on my training and experience as set forth above, I am aware that obtaining money under false pretenses and transmitting said money through interstate commerce via Walmart servers located in Bentonville, Arkansas or Colorado Springs, Colorado, and then to “First Data,” the payment processor that services Walmart gift cards through its servers located in either Chandler, Arizona or Omaha, Nebraska, violates Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

THE WIRE FRAUD SCHEME

5. The Secret Service Financial Crimes Task Force (SSFCTF) is conducting a joint investigation with Walmart Global Investigations concerning an ongoing credit card fraud scheme. The SSFCTF is attached to the United States Secret Service Birmingham Field Office and the investigation is being conducted in

Birmingham. The fraud scheme, however, is not localized to the southeastern United States. Instead, the scheme involves a variety of phone and internet scams with victims of these scams located in states across the country. The victims are lured into a scam in a number of different ways, including:

- Responding to a text message;
- Responding to an email;
- Searching for a particular type of financial service on the internet, inputting basic info (name, phone), where someone contacts them back, presumably from a fraudulent website.

6. After the initial contact is made, victims are conned into one of many scams. Some of the known scams are:

- Pay off past due credit at a fraction of the cost with Walmart gift cards;
- Money is temporarily wired into the victim's bank account to "prove the account" is real. The victim then sends the "Company" back that money in the form of Walmart gift cards. The wire is either quickly rescinded or is found to be fraudulent and then canceled;
- Receive a business email with the victim's true supervisors' info in the text of the email signature, that requests the victim quickly go buy Walmart gift cards and send pictures of the gift card numbers for the supervisor to give away at a conference that he or she is attending;

- A Walmart associate is contacted by someone claiming to be from the Home Office in Bentonville or from a company named NCR, which runs all of Walmart's registers/systems. They tell the associate that they are testing that stores system and want them to practice loading a gift card to see if the system reads it correctly. Then to confirm it worked, they have the associate read the gift card information to them over the phone.

7. Once the victim is defrauded into buying Walmart gift cards and sending pictures of the full gift card number to the exploiters, those gift cards are used around the country within a few hours by "runners" who appear to be of Chinese decent. Many of the runners who have been identified by law enforcement are not U.S. citizens. The runners receive gift card numbers from participants in the wire fraud scheme on their smart phone in the form of a UPC code, often through the "GiftMe App." That UPC code is scanned by the runner at a Walmart register, typically in the self-checkout lane to avoid detection of the fraud, which liquidates the Walmart gift cards by purchasing prepaid debit cards (*i.e.* Visa/MasterCard Vanilla or AMEX) or other gift cards (*i.e.* iTunes cards, Google Play, Steam, etc.). Once the Walmart gift cards have been converted to another prepaid debit or gift card, the runner often takes pictures of the cards and sends them back to others involved in the scheme. That participant then liquidates all of the cards again.

LIN LONGJIN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WIRE FRAUD SCHEME

8. On February 18, 2020, Walmart Global Investigator Jordan Fowler notified the SSFCTF that a suspect connected with the wire fraud scheme was in the Northern District of Alabama, specifically Huntsville, Alabama, liquidating gift cards that had been fraudulently obtained. The suspect, **LIN LONGJIN**, was rapidly traveling between Walmart locations in Tennessee and continuing into Alabama.

9. Based on what I have learned in this investigation, runners involved in the wire fraud scheme do not remain at a Walmart location for more than 10 or 15 minutes.

10. Fowler also notified Walmart Asset Protection that an Asian male, identified as LIN LONGJIN, had been identified at a Huntsville, Alabama Walmart location perpetrating a gift card scam. Walmart associate, Jamie Cutler, then observed LONGJIN enter the Walmart Supercenter located at 3031 Memorial Parkway SW in Huntsville, Alabama. Cutler observed LONGJIN complete a gift card purchase at a self-checkout kiosk, and further observed LONGJIN scan his personal phone to complete the purchase. Cutler then intercepted LONGJIN and confiscated the gift card that was purchased in the transaction. Cutler notified Walmart Asset Protection, who called the Huntsville Police Department. The United States Secret Service was also notified.

12. LONGJIN was arrested by the Huntsville Police Department and his vehicle was towed incident to his arrest. The inventory search of the vehicle returned a large number of gift cards in varying increments, including Vanilla Visa, Google Play, iTunes, PSP, and Nintendo gift cards.

13. Huntsville Police confirmed that a known victim, Ellen Biebesheimer, was defrauded of approximately \$19,000 in the scheme. At least a portion of the funds sent by Ms. Beibesheimer were used to purchase gift cards at Walmart locations in the Northern District of Alabama.

14. Each time **LIN LONGJIN** scanned the Walmart Gift Card number (UPC Format) at checkout, it transmitted a wire from each Walmart location, including Huntsville, Alabama, to a Walmart Inc. Server, located in Bentonville, Arkansas or Colorado Springs, Colorado. A wire was then sent to First Data servers in either Chandler, Arizona or Omaha, Nebraska. These servers then confirmed the balance of the cards and debited each gift card account number for the amount being used to pay for the transaction. Once that occurred, interstate wires were sent back to the same Walmart servers in Arkansas or Colorado, which routed the wire communication back to the Walmart location in the Northern District of Alabama, specifically Huntsville, Alabama.

15. The investigation has determined that LONGJIN is responsible for conducting these fraudulent transactions in at least three states with an estimated

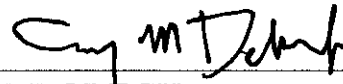
total loss amount of over \$115,000.

16. In addition to Ms. Biebesheimer, the investigation has confirmed at least two other known victims were defrauded in the scheme. Victim Larry George is from Iola, Kansas. He was contacted regarding a federal loan, and told that he was approved. Prior to receiving the funds, however, George was instructed to go to Walmart and purchase “shopping cards.” George purchased two \$200 Walmart gift cards on February 17, 2020, and then provided the full 16 digit gift card number over the telephone to a participant in the wire fraud scheme. In furtherance of the scheme, the participant then sent the Walmart Gift Card numbers to LONGJIN to use at Walmart locations in Huntsville, Alabama, and elsewhere.

17. Walmart Global Investigators also contacted Ruth Tisdale in connection with this investigation. Tisdale resides in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and advised that she was contacted regarding an issue with her cell phone service. Tisdale was told that she needed to pay money to fix her service, but was assured that a rebate would be issued to her. Tisdale was instructed to purchase Walmart gift cards and to provide the full gift card number over the telephone. Tisdale followed these instructions, and purchased two \$500 Walmart gift cards on February 17, 2020. The “rebate” that she was promised then appeared in her bank account. A short time later, however, the “rebate” disappeared from her account and she realized that she had been defrauded. On the same day that Tisdale purchased the Walmart gift card

in Oklahoma, LONGJIN used the Walmart gift card to purchase other gift cards at a Walmart location in Huntsville, Alabama.

18. Based on the facts and information presented above, I request a Federal Arrest Warrant for **LIN LONGJIN** for wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343. FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.



COREY M. DOBECK
Special Agent, United States Secret Service

Sworn to and subscribed before me on the 20th day of February, 2020.



HON. JOHN ENGLAND
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE